

for an error of opinion." He favoured a compromise which should unite Catholic and Protestant, and in 1564 set some of the moderate divines on either side to work to find a basis of agreement. The effort miscarried, and the decision of the Council of Trent made such efforts more illusory than ever. But if the prince and many of his fellow-magnates were at this period either lukewarm or rational in religion, the people were in ever larger numbers rallying with passionate earnestness to the creed of Calvin. And—ominous portent for Philip and the bigots—the more numerous the disciples of Calvin or Luther, the louder the outcry for moderation or even for liberty of conscience. "I fear," wrote Viglius to Granvelle in August 1564, "much worse for the future in view of the expressions which one hears too freely uttered everywhere, some being for the moderation of the placards (edicts), others for liberty of conscience." These Calvinists were most numerous in the Walloon provinces, but they were gaining adherents in Holland, Zealand, Utrecht. Congregations were already established in the chief towns of Brabant, Flanders, Hainault; in Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Tournay, Ypres, Valenciennes. A Calvinist synod met at Antwerp to promulgate the Belgic Confession. Antwerp was in fact already a Protestant city, and women about to become mothers migrated thither in order that their children might be born on Protestant soil. Calvinist preachers wandered through the land in spite of edicts and inquisitors, and won many recruits among the masses, if not among the higher classes, for the Protestant army. The lull in persecution, following the dismissal of Granvelle, favoured the labours of these clerical recruiting sergeants. To carry out the edicts to the letter, as Philip insisted, was now to risk revolt and anarchy. "Affairs," wrote Viglius to Granvelle in November 1564, "especially those of the religion, are daily going from bad to worse, and the authority of his majesty, which it will be difficult to re-establish, is losing greatly." It was in vain that intolerant ecclesiastics like the Archbishop of Cambrai cried out for the blood of all heretics, rich or poor, even if the country should go to ruin. A large part of the Catholic population was as hostile to the edicts as the heretics, and the hostile spirit of the people showed itself in attempts to rescue the victims of intolerance.